

Asperger's syndrome and the Feingold Diet

My son, Damian, started on Feingold when he was 2 ½ years old. The school he was attending recommended that we consider the diet because he was having problems with concentration and was very overactive, even for a 2 ½ year old!

Within the first week of starting Feingold, his teacher commented on the fact that his speech had improved considerably and that he was actually sitting still through circle time. (In the beginning, we could always tell if he had a "bad" food because his speech would slur.)

Through trial (and a few errors), we found that Damian is best on mostly Stage One foods, though he is sensitive to some of those, too.

After being on the diet for a little over 2 years, he had some behavioral issues at school, and the director (who recommended Feingold in the beginning) felt that he probably needed medication and urged us to see a behavioral therapist. At about the same time, we realized that he had problems with soy and removed that from his diet.

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After seeing a news story on autism that mentioned Asperger's Syndrome and some of the symptoms, I did more research, and everything I read said, "This is Damian." So we took him to a specialist who confirmed that my son has Asperger's Syndrome (AS). From the time we started the Feingold diet, we could tell if he'd eaten something he was sensitive to because we'd have more meltdowns and problems with concentration. We always thought these things were related to ADD/ADHD, although we never bothered getting a diagnosis since the diet helped so much and he was so much better while on it.

With the diagnosis of AS, I have found these meltdowns and problems concentrating are actually AS related rather than ADD/ADHD. So many of the parents on the AS support groups mention the meltdowns, and I always mention how much Feingold has helped my son. I can't believe how many of the kids are on drugs for things that could probably be helped with Feingold. I mention it whenever an opening comes up, but most people believe it's just wishful thinking.



If he's on the diet, he's an easygoing, fun-loving, wonderful kid. If he's eaten something that doesn't agree with his system, he has meltdowns at the drop of a hat, becomes aggressive, and has problems figuring out how to get dressed without help.

I know there is no cure for AS, but with the Feingold Program, my son fits in much better with his peers (and has actually been calm enough for long enough that he's starting to make friends, too!)

The psychiatrist my son saw, who had never heard of Feingold, was skeptical about all the sensitivities my son has to food. How can anyone have a problem with apples of all things? Then, I showed him the food journal, which clearly tracked his food and behavior, and told him that

if a food was suspect, we'd pull it out for a few weeks and then try it again at a later date to see if it was just coincidence, and that unless there was a severe reaction (like tomatoes), we would give it a total of 3 separate tries before we cross it off the list. He looked amazed and said that's exactly what he would do to test Damian for drug sensitivities. After that I had no problems with the doctor. People can be converted! :-)

Damian needed to be on antibiotics, so I insisted the pharmacist give us an uncolored version, not the yellow ones he tried to provide. After 9 days on the medicine, he was acting more and more like he does when he's on mind-altering foods. He was aggressive, having meltdowns, and slurring his words. I think his IQ dropped about 40 points! I just had to tell myself there was only one more day, and then a few days to clear out his system, and he would be my nice, sweet, smart kid just in time for his first day of kindergarten!

Even dye-free prescription drugs can cause problems.

I don't know if it's something with my son or part of his rule-following Aspie-ness, but he refuses to eat any foods that I don't send in to school for him. He passed up cupcakes for a party at school 'cause they weren't from home and had fake colors.'

Editor's note: This isn't unusual at all. Feingold kids -- even little ones -- do this all the time; they are typically very bright and know how they will feel/ behave if they eat dyes, etc.

Continued

Damian Today

Damian continues to do well on Feingold, and everyone around him can definitely tell if he's had something "off" or "too much of a good thing" such as some of the Stage Two foods. Without Feingold, I have no doubt that Damian would not be functioning anywhere near as well as he does in the 'real world.' He's 10, in 6th grade, enrolled in gifted classes for all of his core subjects and just made honor roll for his first trimester of middle school. But when he's off the diet for whatever reason, I get back math papers that show $2+2=2$. I kid you not!

Damian has Aspie friends who have also benefited from the Feingold Diet, even though they don't have anywhere near the number of sensitivities he does.

He loves working with computers and wants to write computer games when he grows up.

He has already selected a college and wants to live in an apartment since he doesn't want to be around as many people as are usually in dorms and because they don't have real kitchens, an important factor for the Feingolder who lives away from home. Damian is already a great cookie baker, so he will be comfortable feeding for himself when he's on his own. "

Melissa van der Zwan